A PROPOSED PROGRAM OF EDUCATION FOR PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE IN NORTH CAROLINA

BY

CLARENCE CAYCE SCARBOROUGH

B.S., Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1935
M.S., Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1940
Ed.M., University of Illinois, 1949

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
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Teachers education is concerned not only with prospective teachers in the program, but with their future students as well. Therefore, it is particularly important that a defensible philosophy of education be operating in any teacher education program. There is an urgent need for future-centered teacher education, just as there is need for future-centered schools. There is some concern that teacher education is not keeping up with the present demands upon teachers and schools.

The Problem

The problem in this study was to develop a proposed program of education for prospective teachers of vocational agriculture in North Carolina. It was felt that a broad approach, rather than the more common procedure of studying a particular phase of a program, would be more significant and serve as a framework for future studies needed in specific areas.

The approach to the problem was one of evaluating and planning: evaluation of the present program and planning for needed changes. Underlying both the evaluation and the planning was always the guiding question, *"What should be?"*. The entire study was concerned with seeking direction for needed changes rather than with determining a specific blueprint for the education of prospective teachers of vocational agriculture at North Carolina State College.

The basis for *what should be* was determined through study and analysis of the objectives of teacher education. It was recognized that the objectives of a particular program are largely determined by the philosophy of education of those responsible for developing the program.

Procedures

Perhaps the unique feature of the study was the special effort to secure reactions from the people concerned with a program of agricultural education. It was felt that they would have contributions to make at their levels of participation and that these contributions would have implications of importance for teacher education, particularly at North Carolina State College. The persons reacting varied from the farm boy in his first year of vocational agriculture in the high school to the specialist in teacher training in the United States Office of Education. Reactions were secured from students enrolled in the agricultural education curriculum at North Carolina State College (particularly the student teachers), recent graduates now teaching vocational agriculture, high school principals, staff members at State College, and selected leaders in agricultural education throughout the country.

High school principals were asked to present their ideas about the education of teachers of vocational agriculture without evaluating particular teachers. Some principals were asked to react to some of the issues underlying decisions and policies which are determining factors in a program of vocational agriculture at the community level. It is believed that by using these less personal methods of evaluation more basis and usable reactions were secured. Personal interviews supplemented the written opinions.

To secure "grass-roots" reactions, boys enrolled in vocational agriculture in two communities and some of their parents were asked to participate. The justification for their participation was that their expectations of vocational agriculture, and the teacher, would have implications for the education of teachers. This limited study shows the possibility of valuable and needed research in this field.

One of the major phases of the study involved working with recent graduates who are now teaching vocational agriculture in North Carolina. There were 100 of these young teachers graduated from North Carolina State College during

the previous three years who participated in evaluating and suggesting changes in the program. Personal interviews supplemented the written reactions.

Twenty-five leaders in the field of agricultural education were chosen to serve as a jury of experts who evaluated statements proposed as guiding principles for a program of teacher education.

Perhaps the most important feature, however, was the underlying desire to determine *what should be* the program of education for prospective teachers of vocational agriculture. This gave a new basis for program planning, and eliminated the need for directing criticism at any phase of the present program. The criterion for the evaluation of a proposal was: How well does it fit into *what should be* the progarm of teacher education? If the present program at North Carolina State College, or any other particular program, is used as the basis for evaluating proposed changes, then the proposals advocated in the study might not be valid.

Some Findings

After studying many varying philosophies of education and teacher education, the writer developed his own construct of teacher education which served as a basis for what should be included in the study. This construct, in general, follows the viewpoint that education, including teacher education, is a democratic process with decisions and policies developed through consensus rather than compromise, coercion, or more arbitrary methods. The democratic porcess was to be applied in determining direction and in planning and developing the program so that all would participate who were affected by it. An important assumption in this connection is that a person's reaction to a situation is one of the *primary facts* to be considered, even more important than some of the more commonly accepted facts.

It was with this sort of background that the evaluation of the present program in agricultural education at North

Carolina State College was started. The first essential, then, was to secure reactions from the groups concerned with the program of education for prospective teachers. Some of the reactions are summarized here.

Evaluations by Recent Graduates

Recent graduates who are now teaching vocational agriculture are not well satisfied with some phases of their training at North Carolina State College. The young teachers feel their inadequacy in simple farm skills, such as castrating pigs and running terrace lines; also in farm mechanics, particularly in operating and maintaining power tools and in dealing with the many problems involved in farm mechanization. Only 30 of the 100 teachers participating in the study felt that assistance at North Carolina State College was adequate in acquiring necessary technical knowledge and skill; however, 95 teachers considered them of *much* importance to a teacher of vocational agriculture. Clearly, the need of young teachers for them are urgent and, because of their immediate importance, any lack of them looms disproportionately large. It is believed that young teachers must acquire needed skills and abilities before they are able to turn freely to more important educational matters.

The professional preparation, particularly for working with out-of-school groups, is evidently failing to meet the needs of young teachers. They say that they have not had adequate participatory experiences in adult education. More than one-half of the 100 teachers said that little or no emphasis was given to out-of-school groups in their training program at North Carolina State College. They felt particularly weak in organizing and evaluating programs with out-of-school groups. They are perhaps also in need of a better understanding of the place of education for out-of-school groups in the community.

It was only in the area of teaching high school classes that a majority, 52 per cent, of the teachers felt adequately pre-

pared; however, this feeling of adequacy did not extend to farm mechanics, supervised farming, or FFA activities. Only 17 per cent of the teachers thought their training adequate for developing the desired skills in farm mechanics and for evaluating FFA programs, while 22 per cent considered their training adequate for initiating and developing programs of supervised farming. Training to evaluate programs in all areas was considered inadequate. Only 13 per cent of the teachers said they were capable of evaluating young and adult farmer programs.

Recent graduates were critical of a number of courses, and sometimes of entire areas, in their evaluations of the curriculum in agricultural education. These young teachers were asked to base their evaluations largely on how well the courses within an area, such as agricultural engineering, had helped them to feel proficient in solving problems which they had encountered in that area. Some recent graduates do not value very highly their courses in general education (particularly secondary education and guidance), psychology, history, economics, and rural sociology. This might seem an aversion to the more academic areas of the curriculum; however, it is noted that these young teachers seem generally satisfied with their courses in English, mathematics and science. It should be added that courses in agricultural education also had their critics among the teachers, largely on the basis of low interest and a theoretical approach, who implied failure to operate on the avowed principle of *learning to do by doing.*

Reactions of High School Boys and Their Parents

The reactions of boys enrolled in vocational agriculture to questions relative to the purpose and function of vocational agriculture were secured from two schools. These boys evidently like vocational agriculture and are satisfied with the present program; however, it seems doubtful that they have a clear concept of the purpose of vocational agriculture and how well the aims they conceive are being realized in their

own situations. The boys have a better conception, however, than was evident in interviews with some of their parents who generally consider vocational agriculture as just another course in school evaluated largely by the grades on the report card. This "grass-roots" approach to the expectations of the boys and thier parents as to the teacher and the program of vocational agriculture opens many opportunities for lay participation in agricultural education.

Opinions of High School Principals

High school principals contributed to the evaluation of the program in teacher education. It was believed that since they are the local supervisors of the teachers of vocational agriculture, their ideas of the work of a teacher would be important. Reactions were also secured to some of the major problems underlying a program of vocational agriculture which might reflect their philosophy of the place of vocational agriculture in the local school and community. A number of principals participating in this study evidently look upon the job of the teacher of vocational agriculture as mainly that of teaching high school classes during the school day; other activities, such as supervising the boys' farming programs and working with farmers, are evidently to be done after school hours and on weekends, somewhat in the teacher's spare time. The most common criticism by the principals is that the teacher of vocational agriculture does not consider himself, or the program of vocatioanl agriculture, a part of the *total* school program.

The question obviously raised is: What is meant by the "total" school program? The teacher of vocational agriculture would interpret the term to include classes for adults, while many of the principals evidently would confiine the meaning of a total school program to the boys and girls at school during the school day. Therefore, the major suggestions offered by the principals were centered around the belief that the teacher of vocational agriculture should be more broadly educated, particularly as related to developing a better understanding of

the total school program, as they conceived it, and the problems of the principal. More than three-fourths (79 per cent) of the principals believe that a better understanding of the total school program would make teachers of vocational agriculture better teachers, while practically half (49 per cent) feel that a better understanding of the problems of principals would result in better teachers.

In a general evaluation of teachers of vocational agriculture in comparison with other teachers of similar experience, 60 per cent of the principals said that they were average, 25 per cent above average, 5 per cent below average, 8 per cent considered them to be in the upper 25 per cent.

Reactions from the Jury of Experts

To secure opinions from experts, some principles underlying the proposed program of teacher education were sent to leaders in agricultural education throughout the country. Twenty-five teacher trainers and supervisors were asked to give their reactions to statements as guiding principles for a program of education for prospective teachers of vocational agriculture. In general, these persons were in agreement with the proposed principles; they were unanimous in their endorsement of the necessity of community understanding. The most dissent came in the proposals having to do with individualizing the program of teacher education. It seemed that some of the experts feared that some recognized standards in "The Program"[1] might be lowered if consideration were given to adaptations of a program to meet the individual needs of students enrolled in the program. Some of the experts evidently feared that the democratic processes advocated might also be used to the extent that "The Program" would suffer.

The Proposed Program

The program of teacher education advocated in this study is basically one of participating experiences, evaluation, and

1. A descriptive term for a concept which is not well-defined but clearly exists; perhaps it is roughly determined by tradition and federal and state regulations.

integration at all levels. The immediate changes proposed in the professional area include courses in agricultural education from the freshman year through graduation with participation provided throughout. (They actually would extend through at least the first year of teaching, and possibly through the first three years.) It is hoped that other courses, particularly in agriculture, psychology, and rural sociology can be correlated with student teaching and other participatory experiences.

If such an arrangement for correlation and integration is to be of most value to a student he must be a participant from the beginning; to do this will necessitate more training as well as more participation in the processes of evaluation. It is proposed in this study that provision be made for helping the student develop his maximum ability for self-evaluation and self-direction, that is, self-evaluation of present strengths and weaknesses, and self-direction toward developing the desirable proficiences of an effective teacher of vocational agriculture in a North Carolina community.

Some Implications

For North Carolina State College

The first implication that this study holds for North Carolina State College is that immediate attention should be given to a careful consideration of the present curriculum requirements. Particularly, study should be directed at determining how well balanced the present offerings are in view of the "balanced" teacher needed for the school and community. The prospective teacher cannot take *everything* in his undergraduate course of study and selection is necessarily being practiced at the present time, but a different selective process needs to be developed. If, as advocated in this study, a student can develop his abilities for self-evaluation and self-direction, it might well be the major basis for planning a more highly individualized selective process for determining course needs. Whatever the procedure, study

needs to be directed toward evaluation of present requirements and their functional use by prospective teachers of vocational agriculture.

It was anticipated that a careful study of the needs of the present and future teachers of vocational agriculture would bring about some of the suggested changes. The implication of studying needs is for more democratic procedures in determining needs. A simple but often unused procedure is to ask the present and prospective teachers about their needs, personal as well as professional, which might have been met in college. If they are made to feel that their reactions will actually have some influence, they will gladly participate, as people generally like to have a part in doing things. It is essential to keep the principle of *what should be* as a guide in securing and using such suggestions. If this is not done, some of the essential needs will be overlooked. The young teacher will often need help in determining his needs in this broader context rather than in the more urgently felt immediate problems.

There are some strong implications in this study for the professional program for the prospective teacher. There may be some need for drastic revisions in some of the course offerings, but special effort should first be directed at determining the purposes, and general plan of the professional program. This study clearly shows that some teachers, as well as students, see little or no value in some of the professional program as now conducted. Particularly is this true in general education and psychology. It seems urgent to develop procedures and plans with the students for a better understanding of these professional needs and how the present courses are designed to meet these needs. Then, if these courses do not meet these broad yet specific needs, careful evaluation would reveal their shortcomings. Recent graduates were critical of some of these courses, but it is believed that their criticisms were premature unless they had a clear concept of the purpose of the whole professional program. This study does not indicate that such is the case.

The evaluations by high school principals have a number of implications for teacher education, since they indicate clearly a lack of understanding among the people most concerned with the planning and administering of a program of vocational agriculture in a community. Specifically, many principals believe that the program of vocational agriculture is not a part of the total school program; furthermore, that the teacher does not consider himself a part of the faculty as do other teachers. These are serious implications and must receive the careful study of all concerned.

Subject to further study, it may be pertinent to raise the question of the vision of some of the principals of a school that will adequately serve a community. It seems evident that some principals see the school program as confined to the school building and limited to those enrolled in classes during the regular school day. While some principals look upon vocational agriculture as a connecting link with the community and use it to help bridge the gap between the home and school, this is not generally the case. The criticism by the principal that the teacher of vocational agriculture does not cooperate with the *total* school program, while at the same time his efforts at working with other people in the community are also criticized, leads to the conclusion that the interpretation of a "total" school program varies. Some would argue that confining the efforts of all teachers to the boys and girls enrolled in the school would fall far short of a desirable *total* school program. It is implied here that this problem needs to be explored jointly by principals and teachers of vocational agriculture. Since most of the principals receive their education at institutions other than North Carolina State College and the teachers of vocational agriculture are educated at State College, a cooperative approach could be developed through an in-service program. However, there may be some possibility for cooperative planning by the Schools of Education at State College and University of North Carolina.

Another important implication which should receive early attention is the systematic follow-up of first-year teachers.

Some plans are being made in this direction and a specific program should develop within a few years.

This study shows clearly the need for special attention to cooperative efforts with persons who teach in various subject-matter areas at North Carolina State College. It is evident that a number of courses, as well as entire areas, are not now meeting the needs of the teachers, at least as they see the situation — an important factor whether or not it is the "true" situation. A better understanding of what makes a course functional for prospective teachers of vocational agriculture is needed in the part of all who have these students in classes and laboratories. At least part of this understanding may be dependent upon more association with teachers of vocational agriculture in workshops and in-service courses. This could be done most effectively, perhaps, in agriculture and rural sociology where the needs are already evident.

These implications have been suggested on the assumption that the ned is for teachers of vocational agriculture who can teach in and help develop community schools. If the teacher of vocational agriculture is considered a classroom teacher from "8 to 3" with everything else to be done in his spare time, these implications will not apply.

For Teacher Education

This study was not designed, nor is it now intended, to hold any particular implications for teacher education in general. The institutional and state requirements vary so greatly in this respect that any general application of a proposal, although very valuable for a specific situation, would be doubtful. Furthermore, the people concerned directly with developing a program of teacher education must accept a proposal and act upon it before it finds its way to the prospective teacher.

The democratic procedure of seeking participation of people concerned with teacher education, or its products, could be used to advantage in any situation. One particularly

valuable by-product of this process in teacher education is its influence upon the teacher educator. The "grass-roots" investigation, for example, offers him certain opportunities not found in other types of research. It seems that these field contacts have implications for any program of teacher education.

A similar implication is for more effective use of student participation in evaluating and planning the program of education for prospective teachers. Of all the people who might be interested in the program, the students enrolled should head the list.

Already recognized by some institutions, but often overlooked, is the need for better integration and correlation of theory with practice; learning with doing. Within certain classes this viewpoint is often expounded, but frequently it is completely neglected in the college program of the students. Much of the guidance students need can be accomplished through their participation in real activities of the nature he would have as a teacher. The courses in agricultural education in the freshman and sophomore years, as advocated in this study, together with the summer experiences are designed to meet these needs. Some institutions have developed work-experience programs to better integrate learning and doing by the student.

Inevitable change applies to teacher education as well as to any other aspect of education. Programs of teacher education are notoriously slow to change, one reason being that the programs cut across most subject-matter areas in a college and even a minor change may involve a number of people and departments. It may be that those in teacher education are rather conservative by nature, choice, or some other reason; at any rate the process of change needs to be speeded in many programs of teacher education. It is possible that some young teachers find themselves "behind" when they join an alert high school staff for their first year of teaching. Teacher education must stay ahead of the public schools if the young

teachers are to be prepared to keep up and make contributions in their early years of teaching.

This study points once more to the fallacy of putting faith blindly in specific courses. Needs of teachers, even if carefully determined, are often not met because of misplaced confidence in a course the title of which sounds like a solution to the urgent need of teachers. More attention must be given to the functioning of courses (to the student) if they are to contribute to the broader objectives of teacher education. If these objectives are stated in terms of understandings and proficiencies to be developed by the prospective teacher, then the evaluation of the degree to which a course is functional can be determined.

VITA

Clarence Cayce Scarborough was born at Blue Springs, Alabama, January 19, 1912. He graduated from high school there in 1928. He attended State Teachers College, Troy, Alabama. He was teacher and principal for four years in Dixie Junior High Schohol, Escambia County, Alabama.

He graduated from Alabama Polytechnic Institute in Agricultural Education, with a B. S. in 1935 and M. S. in 1940. He taught vocational agriculture at Lineville High School and Beauregard High School in Alabama from 1935 to 1940. At the latter high school he was also supervising teacher.

From January 1, 1940 through 1943, he was district supervisor of agricultural education in Alabama. He was subject matter specialist and state executive secretary, Future Farmers of America, until entering the Navy in 1944. He returned to Alabama Polytechnic Institute as Associate Professor of Agricultural Education in 1946.

After attending summer school at Ohio State University in 1947, he enrolled in University of Illinois for graduate work in September 1948. He was also a graduate assistant in agricultural education. He received the Ed. M. degree from the University of Illinois in 1949.

In September 1949, he joined the faculty at North Carolina State College as Associate Professor of Agricultural Education in the School of Education, which position he now holds.

He has written several articles for the *Agricultural Education* magazine, edited the *Alabama Future Farmer,* and contributed news articles to newspapers and farm magazines, and prepared teaching materials for teachers of vocational agriculture.

He was married to Margaret Saxon in August 1940. They have two daughters, Susanne, born in October, 1945, and Nancy Margaret, born in March, 1950.